

HISTORY OF OLD SHUSCO.



OLD SHUSCO, as he was commonly called, was an Ojibwa Indian. It is not known where he was born, but it is believed to have been near the island of Mackinaw, in the strait which connects lakes Michigan and Huron. He was left an orphan when about ten days old, and came under the care of six different persons during his childhood and youth. When he was about fifteen, his grandfather undertook to make him a juggler, which is thought by the Indians to be an office of great honor and importance. They suppose that a juggler, or "mystery man," as he is sometimes called, can cure diseases, bring rain to water the earth,

cause the wild deer to come within reach of the hunter's spear, and do many other wonderful things.

To make Shusco a juggler, his grandfather blackened his face with coal, and made him fast ten days ; the only food he had during this time being one cup of broth. This long abstinence nearly caused his death. But Shusco thought he had not been thoroughly made a "mystery man," and therefore fasted a second time, for five days, after which he was regarded as a wise man among his people. He now practised many deceitful arts upon them, to support his influence over their minds ; and in addition, he became a notorious drunkard.

Shusco's wife went to hear the missionaries, and became converted. As Jesus now was precious to her soul, she felt concerned that her husband should know and love him too. His account of the efforts which his wife made to lead him to the knowledge of the Saviour, is in substance as follows. "I did not know that the practices of Indian jugglers were made up of great and sinful errors, till my wife, whose heart had been turned, told me that such was the case. I had no pleasure in hearing her speak of the Christian religion, and said I was satisfied with the religion of my forefathers. She still told me who God is, and what sin is, as it is written in his book. I had before believed that there was one Great Spirit ; but she explained to me the true character of this Great Spirit, made me understand the sinfulness of the heart, and the way in which it is turned from evil to good by believing in Christ Jesus. She told me that the Holy Spirit alone could make my heart better ; and that all who died without having felt this power, would be for ever miserable. I did not like these words, but I could not forget them. When I thought of them, my heart was not fixed and unshaken as it was before. I began to determine that I would not practise the juggler's arts any more, and that I would give heed to what was declared in the Scriptures."

It was in the year 1828 that Shusco felt convinced that he was a sinner, and for some time he was overwhelmed

with a view of his past sins. His wife observed that he was distressed, and asked him the cause. He replied, he was sick at heart. "You must pray," she said, "to God, and he will forgive you." "How can he forgive so great a sinner as I am? I have spent all my life in sinning against him." "But," she answered, "he will forgive you for the sake of Christ, who died for us, if you pray to him; for he forgave me, and I know that he will forgive you also." Shusco tried to pray, but found no relief. Two weeks passed away, and his sins still rose, as it were, before his view, so that it seemed to him that God could not have mercy on him. There was one evil habit to which he had given way, that he now earnestly wished to be delivered from—the sinful practice of drunkenness. He struggled and prayed against it, and against all sin. One night he arose from his bed in great agony of mind, and went to his usual place of prayer, and there he cried to God until, as he said, "he found his burden gone, the hard thing in his heart taken away, and he was not sick any more." In describing the morning that succeeded this conflict, he said, "My heart was filled with love to God and his children. I went out of doors. Oh, it was very pleasant: the sun shone bright; the trees and every thing around looked as they had never looked before. When I sat down to eat my breakfast, Sarah said to me, 'How do you feel now?' 'Very happy; my heart is not sick now, and I think I love God.' 'What day,' said she, 'is it to-day, Shusco?' I told her prayer-day, (the Lord's day.) 'We must not work to-day, but pray to God.' We both then prayed, and were very happy." Thus the first impulse of this converted son of the forest was, to remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.

He now thought of the missionaries at the island of Mackinaw. He had formerly shunned them, but now felt a desire to see them. "I want to tell them I love God now, and am very happy." The news of his conversion soon spread. All who heard of it said, "What hath God wrought!" At first it could scarcely be believed, that he

had become a disciple of Christ ; but when his deep humility, and love to all, especially to Christians, were seen, there was no room for doubt.

Shusco's lodge, or hut, now ceased to be a place for drunkenness and revelry ; for such it had ever been when strong liquor could be obtained. It became the resort of the Indians who loved to pray and praise. One circumstance will show how much he felt his dependence on the Holy Spirit, and how earnestly he sought his aid. He was told that some Indians were coming to the island where he lived ; and he had many fears, as some of them were his wife's relations, lest he should fall into temptation. When they came, he resorted, as usual, to prayer. One morning he was gone out a long time : his wife did not know what had become of him, and she began to fear that he had gone and joined her brethren in drinking. At length he returned, and told her he had been engaged in prayer, and that now he could visit her friends. He went, and found them lying round a pail of whiskey, in a state of drunkenness. They tried to induce him to drink ; but they could not prevail. They said, " Why is it, Shusco, that you will not drink with us now, when you always did formerly, and loved it so much ? " He replied, that the Lord helped him—that formerly, when he tried to leave off drinking, he attempted it in his own strength, and failed ; but that now he had obtained strength from God, and had no desire for ardent spirits, and was resolved never more to touch them. In the evening he observed to a missionary, he had never in his life been so happy as on that day. His being able to overcome a love for whiskey and other strong drink is the more remarkable, as the Indians will sell all they have to obtain it. Shusco was never known to taste it from the time of his conversion.

On Saturday it was the practice of Shusco to go round to all the huts of the Indians, to tell them that the following day would be the Lord's day, and that they must all go to the house of God. When away from the island of Mackinaw, he had no means of knowing the day of the week, as he

could not read. But he prepared a stick to serve as an almanac. Upon this he cut a notch for each day as it passed. At one time he was upon another island at some distance from home, making sugar, and he forgot to cut a notch; consequently, he missed a day. When the Lord's day came, he arose, ate his breakfast, and went out to work as usual. Soon a person who was passing, told him it was the sacred day. He immediately dropped his work, went into the hut, and told his wife what day it was. During the following week he returned home. As he entered the mission house, he was observed to look pale. The first words he spoke were, "I am very sorry; perhaps you will be very sorry for what I have done." "Why, what have you done, Shusco?" "I have broken the Sabbath-day," he said; and then he explained how it had happened. "I thought," he continued, "that I would come and tell you of it myself, and not wait till all the Christians heard of it." He then threw away the stick which he had hitherto used as an almanac, and prepared another.

He showed much gratitude for any kindness done to him. Whenever a friend gave him any thing, he would first look up, and thank the Lord, and then would express his gratitude to the giver. At one time he went in company with his wife to an island where they had previously planted potatoes, for the purpose of digging them. He found that the crop promised to yield abundantly. "Before digging a hill," said he, "we had a prayer-meeting, to thank the Lord for them."

Shusco's attachment to the word and the house of God was remarkable; and often did he visit the missionaries on week-days, to hear them read and explain the Scriptures. The missionaries being about to remove from the island, he said to them, "I see you all now, but by and by I shall see you no more in this world, and I shall be very lonely, for we shall have none to teach us on the Sabbath; but I shall soon see you all again in heaven; this makes me thankful. I feel that I shall soon go where Jesus is." After most of

the missionaries had left, a female member of the mission, before her departure, went to see Shusco. By her he sent a special message to another female member of the mission, who had anxiously sought his spiritual good, and said,

“Do not forget any thing I tell you. Tell her that I am well, and am very happy in my mind ; and if I never see her again in this world, I hope to meet her in heaven. Still, I am but half happy ; for I am half sorry because there are so many drunken Indians around, serving the devil as I once did. How good God has been to me, to make me one of his children. Why did he choose me when I was so great a sinner, and like these poor drunken Indians ? But I pity them, talk to them, and tell them it is the work of the devil to do so ; yet they will not listen. Sometimes they try to get me to drink ; but God keeps me from it. At times I run away from them ; then again I sit still in my hut when they come. Tell her, that perhaps the next time I am sick, I shall go home ; and that she must pray for me, that I may see her in heaven. I will not forget what she has told me about the Bible ; for a great many times I have gone to the mission house hungry, and she has fed me with God’s word. Sometimes, as we sit here, we feel sad, because we have no one to read to us ; still, we will remember what we have heard, and leave ourselves with God, for he knows what is best. When the Sabbath comes, I go to the house of God, and as I sit there, I am happy ; for I think God is there. As I look round the house, and see how nice every thing is, I think how much more beautiful God’s house above will be when I get there.”

A desire to do good to others marked the conduct of Shusco. He was happy himself, and he desired that others might partake of the rich blessings which he had received through Christ Jesus. A few weeks before his death the family of his grandson came to visit him ; all the family were in pagan darkness. Every morning he went to their hut, to talk and pray with them. Soon after their arrival he became so lame that he could not walk ; but this did not

keep him from seeking to do them good ; he crept to their hut upon his hands and knees.

The female friend before referred to returned, and hearing that he was ill, went to see him. After making some inquiries, he asked her to give him her hand, as he was now blind. "Perhaps now," he said, "I am going home. I am very sick, but it will only be a little while that I shall endure pain." "Do you feel happy?" she inquired ; "and are you willing to go now, if it be the Lord's will?" "Yes, very willing," was the reply. "But do you not desire to get well again, if it be the Lord's will?" "Yes, if it is the Lord's will. I leave all in his hands. I thank the Lord for sending his children here to see me when I am sick. He is always very kind to his children, and merciful." He requested the friend to sing his favorite hymn. "I am too sick to join with you," he said ; "but I want to hear it once more." She then sung the hymn beginning,

"On Jordan's rugged banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan's fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie."

On the morning before his death, his wife, seeing that he was very ill, sat down and wept by his side. "Do not weep," he said, "because I am going to leave you, for God will take care of you ; but weep rather for your sins. God has promised to take care of his children. Look to him in prayer ; he has promised, you know, that what we ask in prayer he will give us. Remember what I say, for perhaps this is the last time I shall speak to you. Perhaps you also will soon come where I am going. To-morrow, or next day, perhaps I shall go ; but love God." His wife went out to fetch some wood ; and when she returned he was committing his soul to his Saviour, and commending her also to his fatherly care ; shortly after which he ceased to breathe. He was calm and happy to the last hour of his life, which ended on the 30th of September, 1837.

From this short history of a converted heathen juggler, we see that true religion shows itself in the same way in the experience of men, of whatever tribe or nation. The Gospel is not only suited to those born in a professedly Christian land, but to those also who have been brought up in the darkness of heathenism. When it is applied by the Holy Spirit, it produces the same confidence in God, the same love to Christ, the "like precious faith" in his blood and righteousness as the ground of a sinner's acceptance, the same delight in the Scriptures and in prayer, the same regard for the Sabbath and the people of God, the same hatred to sin and desire to "follow after holiness," the same good hope of heaven and zeal for the salvation of others. By these tests let us examine ourselves: are they to be seen in our lives and experience?

Let it also be observed, that not only those who have been born heathen like poor Shusco, but every man, must be converted, or he cannot be saved. "Ye must be born again." John 3:7. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 18:3. Men in every country, and in every age, inherit a fallen and depraved nature, and left to themselves, they go on adding sin to sin: so that every mouth is stopped, and all the world is guilty before God. Rom. 3:19. May the Holy Spirit renew our hearts, that we may be "new creatures in Christ Jesus;" then we shall joyfully receive that "faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief, 1 Tim. 1:15; then we shall find, to our unspeakable happiness, that "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins."